

Amazing effort helps refugees

KIND-HEARTED villagers from Warblington and Emsworth had a magnificent response to an appeal to help Syrian refugees.

Churchgoers and families from the local C of E school collected almost 100 boxes of clothes to send to desperate families fleeing the civil war in Syria.

And it was volunteers from the congregation who packed up children's clothes, sleeping bags, blankets and other warm clothes for winter, separated them into categories, and sent them off from church in a lorry.

It was their response to an urgent request from the Samara's Aid Appeal, which was launched in 2014 by a Christian mum in Worthing to provide humanitarian relief to displaced people in the Middle East. The church had already responded to the appeal in 2015, and it was advertised again in church over two weeks earlier this year. St James C of E Primary School in Emsworth also asked pupils and their families for help.

Sally Adams, who chairs the parish's mission committee, said: "We hadn't expected such an amazing response from everyone. Lots of bags full of clothes and people staying behind to help.

"Our congregation were very generous and some



Bill Woods, David Rance and Sally Adams pack the van outside St James Church

clearly spread the word further afield. We were in church until half past three on the Sunday, sorting and packing and labelling up the boxes. We didn't have enough boxes, so several people went off to scour the supermarkets for more.

"It was great to see God working through so many people to support, help and give up their time for this worthwhile appeal. It is amazing how a little bit of support, time and help from many can create a combined effort to make such a difference."

And Bill Woods, lay chair of Havant deanery synod, said: "The parish of Warblington and Emsworth has supported

the charity in the past, and we sent 30 boxes of good quality winter clothing last year.

"With the escalation of the refugee crisis, the parish launched another appeal in January, which resulted in an enormous amount of good quality clothing being brought to St James Church. The generosity of the people of Emsworth exceeded our expectations."

The church also raised £400 towards the transportation costs, to add to £500 which had been allocated from the church's mission budget.

It was mum-of-two Samara Levy, from Brighton, who was moved to do something

to help refugees fleeing from Iraq, Syria and elsewhere after seeing their plight on TV. She pledged that all clothing and donations given to Samara's Aid Appeal would go to those in need, regardless of faith, politics or background, to demonstrate the unconditional love of God.

Since September 2015, its Winter Appeal has resulted in 26 lorry-loads of aid being sent to Iraq and Syria, as well as nine ambulances, 1,750 first aid kits, 650 care packs and a range of medical equipment to Syria. The next appeal will be an Easter one. For more details, see: www.samarasaidappeal.org.

Pilgrimage is time to reflect on life's journey

IT'S a chance to join other worshippers for a pilgrimage through our diocese.

Churchgoers from Petersfield deanery will walk up to 35 miles over three days from Liphook to our cathedral, as they reflect on their Christian pilgrimage. The deanery event takes place from April 30 until May 2, and includes pauses for worship at churches along the route.

The idea of the pilgrimage is to symbolise our spiritual journey. It is

designed to be long enough and difficult enough to be a good symbol for our journey through life.

It also allows time for personal reflection on issues such as where we see God's footprints in our lives, what kind of Christian we would like to be, how we can rely more on God and less on material things, and what blessing we'd like to take home.

The first day, April 30, takes the pilgrims from Liphook Church Centre to St Peter's, Petersfield, with

lunch at St Mary's, Liss, and a brief service at St Peter's at 4pm.

The second day involves travelling from Petersfield to Rowlands Castle, with services in Buriton and Idsworth. There's an option to walk another five miles to Havant that day.

And the final day is the 11-mile journey from St Faith's, Havant, along the shore of Portsea Island, arriving in time for Evensong in our cathedral at 6pm on May 2.

Pilgrims are invited to

take part in as much or as little of the journey as they would like. The route is loosely based on the Shipwright's Way.

Some sections are suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs, and there are options for travelling some of the way by train or car. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult.

For more details, see www.petersfielddeanery.org.uk/pilgrimage or contact the Liphook parish office on 01428-725390 or office@liphookchurch.co.uk.

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